

Talisman by orphan_account

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Summary:

Nancy and Steve struggle to find their footing together, and Nancy finds comfort in other ways.

Talisman

He crouched over the window sill and awkwardly maneuvered himself through the opening to drop onto the roof just below. For a moment his face peeked back over the edge to peer in at her and they exchanged tight, baleful smiles. This was how it would be from here on it, wasn't it?

Alone in her room, Nancy didn't move from her spot on the end of the bed, sitting cross-legged on the quilt in her camisole and flannel pajama pants. It was a typical Indiana spring, warm during the days and cool at nights with the occasional rainstorm.

"It will always be a part of our story, Nancy." He had said.

"What?"

"That week." Catching the look in her eye, Steve had chosen to elaborate. "The week Will Byers went missing."

Yes, of course. "So?"

"So, every time I look at you all I can think of is-is that faceless creature, and the night I beat the crap out of a monster, and what your face looked like when you shot that gun, and-"

"Don't be ridiculous, Steve." Was that really all he saw in her now? Sure the memories haunted her as well, but they didn't inhibit her in quite the same way. "There's so much more to it – to us – than that."

Steve had sighed and stood, pacing the carpet beside her bed. Quiet, always quiet, lest her parents should figure out her boyfriend was there.

"I really – I don't know, Nancy... I can't get the whole thing out of my head." He had said at long last.

She wasn't about to lie to him, tell him he would forget it in time, because the truth was she couldn't get the sordid events out of her head either. Then again she had been to the upside down, she had seen what Eleven could do, she had experienced even more

unbelievable things than Steve. "I won't tell you that it will be easily forgotten, but I don't think you can blame remembering on me." Nancy looked up at him tentatively.

"I just don't want it to be part of our story."

"We can't rewrite history to erase it either." Nancy gave in to his implication.

"So I think we should..." He swallowed and stopped pacing, looked down at her perched on the bed.

"Break up?"

Steve nodded.

"Maybe it's for the best." She sighed and pursed her lips. "I guess it's good bye, Steve Harrington."

"Nancy, I.... I want you to know I really liked you, and under different circumstances--"

"Don't," She'd said, inhaling sharply, "Please don't."

"In that case..." Steve bent down and let his lips brush the cool plain of her cheek, "Good bye, Nancy Wheeler."

The drapes fluttered at the window and a cold wind carried into the room, some last remnant of the winter. A reminder. Nancy stood and shut the window, then turned to glance at the clock beside her bed. 1:12 am. How long had she been sitting there? Hadn't Steve left around 11:45 pm?

The breakup hadn't been sudden. She had suspected it from far off. Steve didn't understand what had happened, and unlike Nancy he didn't want to. Gone was the old Steve, the Steve who had been hurt enough, who had cared enough about their relationship, to get angry with her when he had seen Jonathan sleeping over. Gone was the Steve who had gone over to Jonathan's house with a split lip and black eye to apologize. Lately Steve had been, well, distant. He didn't care that Nancy walked the halls of Hawkins High with Jonathan at her side, he didn't care about the rumors, he didn't ever talk with her

about what had happened.

That wasn't to say he didn't care about Nancy. He'd always had her home before curfew, he always respected her boundaries, both physical and emotional. What he didn't care about was them. It had taken a while for Nancy to realize it. To put her finger on the missing element. But she wasn't about to break up with the most popular guy in school. Her, the misfit, the nerd. She always thought she didn't care what people said or thought about her, but that was what Barb had said – that was Barb's influence on her. In the void left by Barb's disappearance, Nancy found that she couldn't bear the ridicule. Not alone.

Now it was mutual though. Her and Steve had broken up with one another. No one was to blame.

Nancy pulled back the quilt and turned down the sheets. It was doubtful that she would find much sleep tonight. Though the break up was a weight off her mind.

Sliding open the top drawer of her dresser Nancy was confronted with socks rolled into pairs, stacks of neatly folded underwear, and bras lined up, the cups of each fitting into the ones before and after like some sort of bizarre Russian nesting doll. She moved her clothes to the side to dig underneath her organized small clothes, unearthing a folded woolen sweater.

She slid the drawer closed with her elbow as she turned toward her bed, shrugging on the sweater. It was oversized on her petite frame. And though it didn't smell like him anymore, it reminded her of him and the way he held her close, gripped her shoulder, and chanted words of reassurance against her ear.

The sweater was itchy and ill-suited to her, but it had become her talisman and her security. Snuggling down into her bed, Nancy flicked off her lamp and rolled over onto her stomach, burying her face in her pillow to avoid the darkness. Her wool clad shoulder brushed her cheek. *I've got you, I've got you.*